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CHAPTER VIII

RACIAL IDEOLOGY AND RACIAL ATTITUDES

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IN RECENT years there has grown up in Brazil a lively interest in the African and his descendants. This has resulted, among other things, in the holding of two *Congressos Afro-brasileiros*, the first of which met in Recife in November, 1934, and the second in Bahia in January, 1937. Composed of intellectuals having a common interest in the Brazilian Negro, their agenda indicate that such interest is confined almost entirely to three fields: (1) the history of African importation and slavery; (2) problems of acculturation, with especial attention to the survivals of African cultural forms; and (3) anthropometric variations. Generally absent is any concern with problems of racial conflict or accommodation, implying quite definitely the comparative absence of these problems in the social order as well as the comparative absence of any race consciousness answering to them on the part of the Negro or any other ethnic group.

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The participants in the 1937 *Congresso*, which met in Bahia, visited fetish-cult centers, witnessed *capoeira*[1] and *samba*[2] presentations, studied the material relics of fetish-cult ceremonies available in Bahian museums, honored the memory of Nina Rodrigues (who some forty years ago pioneered in studies of the Afro-Brazilian cults in Bahia)[3] and

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[1] See chap. ix.

[2] The *samba*, probably of African origin, is a dance with vocal accompaniment (see chap. ix), as well as a musical form.

[3] See Nina Rodrigues, *L'Animisme fétichiste des nègres de Bahia* (Bahia, 1900) and *Os africanos no Brasil* (São Paulo, 1932).

4: Pierson Z-4, 5 (1935-1937) 1967
SOll Bahia Brazilians SOll

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passed resolutions protesting police interference with the *candomblé* and demanding full religious liberty in the exercise of its rites.

Papers presented to this congress by Brazilians dealt with such subjects as "Slave Insurrections in the Province of Espirito Santo during the Nineteenth Century," "Old Documents concerning the Negroes of the Palmares," "Castro Alves and Brazilian Poetical Treatment of the Negro Slave," "The *Africano* in Bahia," "Chapters in Afro-Brazilian Ethnology in Rio Grande," "Bantú Contributions to Religious Syncretism in Brazil," "A Revision of Afro-Brazilian Ethnology," "The *Africano* and His Culture in Brazil," "The *Orixá*[4] of the Poor," "The School of Nina Rodrigues," and "The Negro and the Problem of Acculturation in Brazil." Only one paper was not concerned with ethnological or historical problems; and it, although it took account of ethnic differences, did not treat of any form of racial conflict. It dealt with "The Negro Criminal in Bahia."

Similar questions were discussed in the first *Congresso Afro-brasileiro*, which met in Recife, sponsored by Gilberto Freyre, a social historian whose *Casa grande e senzala* and *Sobrados e mucambos* throw significant light upon the Negro in colonial and imperial Brazil.[5] This gathering was, because of its informal character and the attempt to present factual data, "something new in Brazil."[6] As Freyre describes it:

> There was lacking both formality and a consciousness of class. Around a table, at the head of which different individuals took turns

[4] *Orixá* is a Yoruba word meaning "deity."

[5] An interesting estimate of Freyre's work by Dr. Lewis Hanke appears in the *Quarterly Journal of Inter-American Relations*, July, 1939, pp. 24-44, under the title "Gilberto Freyre: Brazilian Social Historian."

[6] Gilberto Freyre, "O que foi o primeiro Congresso Afro-brasileiro no Recife," in *Novos estudos afro-brasileiros*, ed. Freyre *et al.* (Rio, 1937), p. 348.

[114]

4; Pierson Z-4,5 (1935-1937) 1967
SOll Bahia Brazilians SOll

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presiding in accordance with the varying subjects under consideration, were seated erudite *doutores* from lecture-room and laboratory; huge *filhas de santo*;[7] aged Negro cooks who brought from . . . . the crude kitchens of their mud huts recipes of . . . . Afro-Brazilian dishes; Negroes from the cane fields (like Jovino, whose paper was as full of errors in Portuguese as of *saudades* of the time of the *almanjarras*);[8] . . . . *babalorixás*[9] like Pae Anselmo; queens of the *maracatú*[10] like Albertina de Fleury, whose name reminded José Lins do Rego[11] of the heroine of a romance by Proust; certain others who, although illiterate or semiliterate, had such intimate knowledge of Afro-Brazilian matters as to be able to make an appreciable contribution to the Congress; students of law, engineering, and medicine . . . . ; elderly folklorists like Rodrigues de Carvalho; who never missed a session . . . . ; individuals like Nobrega da Cunha, who knew intimately the ritual of the *macumba*;[12] psychiatrists of the ability and reputation of Ulysses Pernambucano, who was acclaimed with all justice Honorary President; artists like Luis Jardim and Cicero Dias; intellectuals, journalists, and special representatives of Rio newspapers; the teacher, Ernani Braga, who collected for the Congress a number of invocations to Xangô[13] sung by the young ladies of the Conservatorio on the closing day of school to the enthusiastic applause of the best people of Recife. Individuals

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[7] *Filhas de santo* are ceremonial dancers of the fetish cult (see chap. x).

[8] On the sugar plantations of colonial Brazil the beam to which animals were hitched to turn the millstone and crush the cane was called the *almanjarra*.

[9] Priests of the fetish cult are sometimes called *babalorixás*. The word is formed from the Nagô words *bábá* ("father") and *orixá* ("deity").

[10] The *maracatú* was an organization of Negroes which formerly participated in Carnival at Recife (see Mario Sette, *Maxambombas e maracatús* [São Paulo, n.d.], pp. 339-41).

[11] José Lins do Rego is a noted Brazilian novelist whose realistic accounts of lower-class life, particularly in the state of Pernambuco, have helped to reveal a level of culture about which little had previously been written. See, e.g., his *Banguê* (Rio, 1934); *Menino de engenho* (2d ed.; Rio, 1934); *Usina* (Rio, 1936); *Histórias da velha Totônia* (Rio, 1936); *Pureza* (Rio, 1937); *Pedra Bonita* (Rio, 1938); *Doidinho* (Rio, n.d.).

[12] The Afro-Brazilian fetish cult is known in Rio de Janeiro as the *macumba*.

[13] Xangô (pronounced "Shán-go") is a deity of the fetish cult (see chap. x).

4: Pierson Z-4, 5 (1935-1937) 1967
SOll Bahia Brazilians SOll

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who at last had seriously taken up "these Negro things" and had found them to be something more than merely picturesque, ... to be, in fact, a great living part of the genuine Brazilian culture.[14]

Before this democratic gathering were read such papers in history and ethnology as the following:[15]

England and the Slave Traffic
Three Centuries of Slavery in Parahyba
The Negro in the History of Alagôas
The Negro during the Dutch Occupation
Unusual Slaves
Physical Deformities of Negro Slaves
The Republic of the Palmares
The Negro Laborer in the Time of the *Bangué*[16] Compared with the Negro Laborer in the Time of the Sugar Factories
The Diet of Brazilian Slaves
Abolition and Its Causes
African Diseases in Brazil
Negro Music in Africa and Brazil
The Negro in the Folklore and Literature of Brazil
The Drama among Early Brazilian Negroes
The Contribution of the Negro to Brazilian Culture
A List of Nagô Words
Xangô
The Legend of Xangô and Its Corruption in Brazil
Invocations to Xangô Heard in Recife
African *Seitas*[17] in Recife
Notes on the *Catimbó*[18]

[14] *Op. cit.*, pp. 348–52.

[15] In several cases titles have not been translated literally; instead, an effort has been made to indicate more definitely the actual subject matter discussed.

[16] The primitive sugar mill used in colonial Brazil, often called the *engenho*, was also known as the *bangué*. [249]

[17] A fetish-cult center is often referred to as a *seita*.

[18] *Catimbó* is a word commonly used in northeast Brazil to designate the fetish cult, which is also known as the *candomblé* (in Bahia) and the *xangô* (in Recife). [794]

4: Pierson Z-4, 5 (1935-1937) 1967
SOll Bahia Brazilians SOll

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Ohum Eniadúdú[19]
Recipes for Afro-Brazilian *Quitutes*[20]
The *Calunga*[21] of the Maracatús
The "People's Library" and the "Modern Collectanea"[22]

Obviously, there is implied in these titles no interest other than in history and ethnology. But in the following ten papers, although there again appears to be no concern with problems of racial accommodation, one does note an awareness of physical differences and an interest in their measurement.

Some Anthropological Measurements of the Population of Recife
Some Data on the Physical Characteristics of the Population of Recife
Some Physical Measurements of Brazilian Negroes and Mulattoes
A Study of Cephalic Indices and Color Variation among Mulattoes in Pernambuco
A Contribution to the Study of Lapicque's Index
Physical Measurements of Negro Students
Comparative Heights and Weights of Newborn *Branco*, *Pardo*, and *Preto* Babies
A Statistical Study of Longevity in *Brancos*, *Pardos*, and *Pretos*
The Comparative Incidence of Tuberculosis in *Pretos* and *Brancos*
Mental Disease among the Negroes of Pernambuco

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[19] Under this title two topics were considered: (1) legends from Dahomey and (2) Anamburucú (an Afro-Brazilian deity [see chap. x]).

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[20] *Quitutes* are food delicacies.

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[21] The *calunga* referred to here was a richly adorned female image representing a water deity. It was carried by the "Dama do Passo," a female dancer of the Maracatú.

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[22] The "Modern Collectanea" and the "People's Library" are two sets of inexpensive leaflets containing ballads and other folklore, historical sketches, anecdotes, prayers, recipes, etc. See, in this connection, Jorge Amado, "Literatura dos negros e mulatos da Bahia," *Revista do Arquivo Municipal de São Paulo*, XLVIII (June, 1938), 179–82.

[214]

4: Pierson Z-4, 5 (1935-1937) 1967
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Quite exceptional in their subject matter are the following three papers:

Race Mixture in Brazil as a Eugenic Factor
The Mixed-Blood and the Problem of Degeneracy
The Social, as Opposed to the Racial, Causation of Degeneracy

These three papers, concerned as they obviously are with the oft-considered question of the relation of race mixture to degeneracy, indicate some concern in Brazil with this problem and thus appear at first sight to imply an interest in race relations in the North American sense of that expression. The question at issue turns out to be, however, largely an academic one, evoked perhaps by foreign literature and concerned with supporting arguments of white superiority and of Negro inferiority originating in Europe and the United States. At any rate, it is true that certain scholars, at a loss to account for the persistence in twentieth-century Brazil of African cultural forms, have seriously come to question the cultural capacities of the black race and to believe the future of Brazil prejudiced by the infusion of African blood.

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Thus, about 1900, Nina Rodrigues, intimately acquainted with a number of Africans in Bahia and impressed with the slow rate at which they and their descendants were sloughing off African cultural forms and being assimilated into the white world,[33] and also influenced to a considerable degree by foreign writers,[34] raised very earnestly the question of "the capacity of the Negro to accommodate himself to the civilization of the superior races."[35] Doubting specifically the ability of the Negro to take on European civilization,[36]

[33] *Os africanos no Brasil*, pp. 407–9; see also *ibid.*, chaps. v–vii.
[34] *Ibid.*, chap. vi, esp. pp. 388–98.
[35] *Ibid.*, p. 385. [36] *Ibid.*, p. 391.

4; Pierson Z-4,5 (1935-1937) 1967
SOll Bahia Brazilians SOll

tive case escape identification with a group into which he has been born, not only so far as race is concerned but even to some extent color as well, and if there is little attempt on the part of other persons to treat him differently merely because some of his ancestors were of different ethnic origin, "we-group" and "others-group" will delay in arising as objects in his experience; or, having arisen, will tend to be vague and inchoate entities, not vivid, clear cut, and sharply defined.

Few colored intellectuals in Bahia are at all interested in studying and writing about the Negro; and, of those who are, such as the *preto* João da Silva Campos and the *pardos* Edison Carneiro and João Varella, their interest lies rather in the *Africano*, in his customs and traditions, and especially in those survivals of African culture still extant among descendants of imported slaves.

There is no tendency to dignify the term "Negro" as there is among race-conscious Negroes in the United States. In fact, as we have already seen, "Negro" is a term rarely used either by blacks or by whites. When on occasion it is employed, no Bahian colored man, unless by chance he has been in the United States or in communication with American Negroes, is at all concerned about spelling it with a capital *N*. Nor does he resent the word *ama* ("mammy").

This is not to say, however, that the blacks and the mixed-bloods are completely satisfied with their lot and that they utter no protest against the fate which has made the white man largely superordinate both economically and socially. On the contrary, the lower-class Negro often conceives of himself as mistreated and misunderstood.

There are, in this respect, two classes of blacks in Bahia: (1) those who are aware of, and articulate about, the race

[SALVADOR]

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562 may not be of African blood (3).
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3. Arthur Ramos, Introduçao a Antropologia Brasileira, II, Rio de Janeiro, 1947.

829 The Indians and the descendants of the cross between Indians
*563 and Whites are generally called cabôclos, but this expression is
192 no longer very common in Bahia and rarely serves to characterize
[178] the corresponding type. The term cabôclo has become, like that
[196] of "my Negro," rather a formula of tenderness between individual
175 of any color whatsoever. It must be noted, moreover, thanks to
829 old statistics, that toward the middle of the eighteenth century,
648 response to complaints about Brazilian "nativism," the Portuguese
641 government prohibited the use of the term cabôclo, to which was
576 then attached an insulting meaning, and granted at the same time
192 civil status of Whites to Indians and to their descendants of mixed blood, so that they could contract marriage with the Whites and fulfill official duties in the colony; it is in that manner that the contingents of mamelucos or cabôclos were assimilated with the
192 Whites in the military roles of the time. The word meanwhile
178 lost its insulting import and in our day is even considered a com-
829 pliment when it refers to a cabôclo bom, that is to say, a man of
576 good manners.

144 The Negroid albinos and the mulattoes with red, blond, or
192 light auburn hair are known by the name of sararás.

The exact designation of these different types has always /14/
144 represented a difficulty, as much for anthropologists as for the
*563 persons charged with identifying school children, the military,
829 the criminals (1).

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1. According to the Bahian anthropologist Nina Rodriguez (in her book As raças humanas e a responsabilidade penal no Brasil /The Human Races and Penal Responsibility in Brazil/, 3rd edition, written at the beginning of the century), the métis include: 1st, the mulattoes produced from the cross between the White and the Negro:

[SALVADOR]

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a) mulattoes of prime blood; b) light mulattoes tending to revert to the white race; c) dark mulattoes, cabras, product tending to revert to the black race, some almost completely identified with the creole Negroes, the others more easily separable; 2nd, the mamelucos or cabôclos, products of the cross between White and Indian; 3rd, the product of the cross of the three races and especially the cross between the mulatto and the Indian or with the mamelucos and cabôclos. Arthur Ramos in his book A aculturaçao negra no Brasil /Negro Acculturation in Brazil/, 1942, p. 58, and in other works, one of which is "The Negro in Brazil," in Brazil, Portrait of Half a Continent, edited by Lynn Smith and A. Marchant, New York, 1950, p. 130, adopts almost the same classification, but proposes that, in order to avoid inaccuracies, one use the words pardo, mulatto, and métis as synonyms.

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In response to the demand of a lawyer, the head of the Bureau of Judicial Identification of the civil police of the State of Bahia stated some years ago that in his department one uses, according to the judgment of the identifier, the terms White, moreno, pardo, métis, and Black. A woman official who has worked for a long time in this service describes the different Bahia types thus: "The métis is a descendant of Black and mulatto; the pardo is the son of a mulatto and a White; the mulatto is derived from a White and a Black: he may be light, but he will always have lips that are thick and reddened by pigmentation; the moreno is the mulatto fino, and the Black is an individual with pronounced Negro traits."